

# Primary assessments guide for parents

England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland





# Introduction

As a parent, you play a vital role in your child's education. Understanding how your child is assessed at primary school can help you support them effectively and feel confident about their learning journey.

As a father to six children who have completed primary education, with two more to follow, I know this guide will be a helpful resource. It explains the key assessments your child may take throughout primary schools across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. It includes tips, practical advice and 'Did you know?' facts to help you feel informed and prepared.

The results from national assessments are used to help measure how much progress children are making during their time in primary school. They

also help teachers support your child's ongoing development throughout their school journey.

This guide is designed to give you a clear and helpful overview of what to expect and how to support your child along the way. With practical tips, friendly advice and useful timelines, we're here to help you feel confident and positive about your child's learning journey.

**Jason Elsom**  
CEO, Parentkind



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# England

## Key dates


-  **Reception**  
Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA)  
First six weeks of reception
-  **Reception**  
Early years foundation stage (EYFS) profile  
April to June
-  **Year 1**  
Phonics screening check  
June
-  **Year 2**  
Key stage 1 (KS1) tests (*optional*)  
May (if used)
-  **Year 4**  
Multiplication tables check (MTC)  
June
-  **Year 6**  
Key stage 2 (KS2) National curriculum tests (commonly referred to as SATs – Standard Assessment Tasks)  
May

## Reception year


During their reception year, children will take part in two main assessments designed to help teachers understand their learning and development. The Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) takes place within the first six weeks of starting school and provides a starting point for measuring a child's progress throughout primary school.


At the end of the reception year, the early years foundation stage (EYFS) profile is completed and gives a picture of each child's development across key areas of learning.


## Reception Baseline Assessment

 **What**  
The Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) is a national assessment for children entering reception

classes (age four to five) in England. It's designed to provide a snapshot of a child's skills and abilities in areas like literacy, communication, language and maths when they start school. The RBA is not a typical 'test' that can be passed or failed, but rather a tool to measure progress as children move through primary school.

 **When**  
The RBA will take place within the first six weeks of your child starting reception.

 **How**  
Your child will work one-to-one with a teacher or teaching assistant on simple tasks like counting objects, naming pictures and identifying patterns.

 **Why**  
Results are used to measure the progress children make throughout their time in primary school. It does not affect your child's learning or how they are grouped.

Encourage early counting and conversation at home by involving your child in everyday tasks like laying the table or sorting laundry.




### Remember

There is no pass or fail – it's simply a way for schools to see what your child knows already, so they can provide the right support for early learning.




## Early years foundation stage profile


 **What**  
The early years foundation stage (EYFS) profile is a national assessment completed at the end of the reception year (age four to five) in England. It's a teacher assessment that provides an overview of your child's development across 17 Early Learning Goals (ELGs). **These goals are grouped into seven key areas of learning:**


- Communication and Language
- Physical Development
- Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED)
- Literacy
- Maths
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and Design



The EYFS profile is not a formal test, but a way for teachers to understand how well your child is progressing as they get ready to move into Year 1.

 **When**  
Between April and June of your child's reception year.

 **How**  
Teachers use their professional judgement – along with what they've observed and know about your child – to decide whether they are meeting the expected level of development for each Early Learning Goal (ELG). They focus on what your child can do independently during everyday classroom activities. For each ELG, your child will be assessed as either 'expected' (meeting the expected level) or 'emerging' (not yet at the expected level).

 **Why**  
The results of the EYFS profile help teachers to plan the right support as your child moves into Year 1. You'll receive a written summary of your child's progress at the end of the reception year.



Reading with your child every day and talking about stories is a great way to build their language and understanding skills.

# Year 1

Year 1 is an exciting time as your child begins to build on the foundational learning from reception. In this year, your child's first national assessment is focused on early reading skills. The **phonics screening check** helps teachers understand how well your child is using phonics to read words, which is a key step toward becoming a confident, independent reader.

## Phonics screening check

### ★ What

A short, one-to-one assessment designed to check how well your child can sound out and read words – an important early reading skill. It helps schools ensure children are on track with their reading development.

### ★ When

June of Year 1.

### ★ How

Your child will sit with their teacher and read 40 words out loud from a list. These include a mix of real words and made-up or 'nonsense' words. The nonsense words are included to make sure your child can apply their phonics knowledge rather than relying on memory.

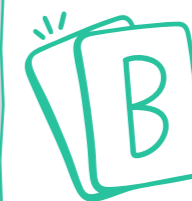
### ★ Why

The check helps identify children who need extra phonics support. If your child does not meet the expected standard, they'll receive additional help and will re-take the check in Year 2.



#### Did you know?

The pass mark is usually 32 out of 40, but the check is not about passing or failing. It's about assessing if appropriate progress is being made. You'll be informed of your child's result by the school.



Encourage your child to practise sounding out words while reading. Try phonics-based games like **Buried Treasure** or online phonics apps for fun practise at home.



## Year 2

In Year 2, children begin to develop more independence in their learning. Although Key stage 1 tests are optional, some schools still choose to use them to help understand pupils' progress in reading, writing and maths. These assessments are designed to support your child's next steps as they move into Key stage 2.

### Key stage 1 tests (optional)

#### ★ What

Optional assessments in reading and maths, and sometimes grammar, punctuation and spelling (GPS), also referred to as Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (SPaG) in some schools.

#### ★ When

Usually during May, towards the end of Year 2. The tests are low-pressure and are often completed in small groups or in a relaxed classroom setting to minimise stress.

#### ★ How

- **Reading:** Two short papers that check your child's understanding of written texts, including fiction and non-fiction
- **Maths:** Two parts – arithmetic (basic calculations) and reasoning (solving problems and applying maths skills)
- **GPS (if used):** A short test on grammar, punctuation and spelling

#### ★ Why

Teachers use the test results alongside their daily observations and knowledge of your child's work to make a final judgement on whether your child is working at, above or below the expected standard.

You'll receive a teacher assessment that summarises how your child is doing in key areas.



**Make reading part of your daily routine. Let your child choose books they enjoy and ask open-ended questions to build understanding.**

#### Try questions like:

- "Why do you think that character felt that way?"
- "What do you think made he character do this?"
- "What do you think might happen next?"
- "Can you tell me about your favourite part?"
- "How would you have reacted in that situation?"

**For maths, include them in cooking, shopping or measuring activities to make it real and relevant.**



#### Did you know?

These assessments are designed to help teachers tailor their teaching, not to judge your child. Many schools use them simply to inform planning and to better support every pupil's needs.

## Year 4 ✨

By Year 4, children are expected to have a strong grasp of times tables. This year includes the multiplication tables check (MTC), a quick online assessment that makes sure pupils have essential number facts at their fingertips to support more advanced maths in later years.

### Multiplication tables check

#### ★ What

A short online assessment to check how well your child knows their multiplication facts up to  $12 \times 12$ .

#### ★ When

June of Year 4.

#### ★ How

Your child will answer 25 multiplication questions on a computer or tablet. They will have just six seconds to answer each one, making it a quick-fire challenge.

#### ★ Why

The test highlights which children may need more support with their times tables. Your child's school will have access to the overall results.

$$12 \times 12 =$$

Turn multiplication practice into a game. Apps like **Times Tables Rock Stars** or simple card games can make learning tables enjoyable and boost speed. **See our resources guide for more ideas.**



#### Did you know?

Being fluent in times tables helps with everything from division to fractions, and even long multiplication – skills your child will need in upper primary and secondary school.



# Year 6

Year 6 marks the final year of primary school and is a time of preparation for secondary education. It includes the Key stage 2 tests, often known as Standard Assessment Tests (SATs), which assess progress in English and maths. While they can feel like a big milestone, SATs are just one part of your child's learning story.

## Key stage 2 tests (SATs)

★ The SATs cover:

- English reading
- Grammar, punctuation and spelling (GPS)
- Maths (comprising arithmetic and reasoning)

In addition, English writing and science are assessed by the teacher during the summer term, based on work completed across the year.

The writing tests are assessed by the teacher, based on work completed across the year, while the Standards and Testing Agency is responsible for externally marking the other tests.

★ **When**

May of Year 6, across four days.

★ **How**

Pupils sit formal papers under exam-style conditions. They may feel more structured than other primary assessments, but teachers prepare children well in advance.

★ **Why**

The tests are marked externally, and scores are given as a 'scaled score'. A score of 100 means your child has met the expected standard. Your child's results are shared with you as well as with your child's future secondary school to help support transition.



Practise with past papers to help your child get used to the format, but keep things in perspective and don't put too much pressure on your child. Encourage good sleep, a healthy breakfast and lots of reassurance during SATs week.



### Did you know?

Schools also assess your child throughout the year. The SATs are just a snapshot. The teacher's knowledge of your child is just as important!

### Good to know

There are two additional assessments for pupils working below the standard of the national curriculum at the end of KS2:

- **The pre-key stage standards** - a teacher assessment tool to support and assess pupils who are working below the standards of the national curriculum but are engaged in subject-specific study.
- **The engagement model** - a teacher assessment tool to support and assess pupils who are working below the standards of the national curriculum and not engaged in subject-specific study. It may be used for pupils who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).



# Scotland

## Primary 1 assessment

Children in Primary 1 begin to explore early literacy and numeracy through play-based learning. To help understand each child's progress, schools use the Scottish National Standardised Assessments (SNSAs). There are two tests in P1: Literacy and numeracy.

### ★ What

A online, interactive assessment designed to check your child's progress in early language and numeracy. It helps teachers tailor their teaching to support your child effectively.

### ★ When

There is no fixed national date for the assessment, and it takes place at any time during the school year that suits the school.

### ★ How

Children complete short tasks using a tablet or computer. The questions adapt depending on how your child is doing, so every child has a unique experience. The assessment is informal and carried out in a familiar setting to reduce pressure.

### ★ Why

Teachers use the results alongside their own observations to help understand how your child is developing and what support they might need. Results are not shared with pupils and there is no pass or fail.



**Encourage your child's confidence in early learning by talking about numbers in everyday life and reading together regularly.**



### Did you know?

The assessments are designed to feel like part of your child's normal classroom activities and many children don't even realise they're being assessed.



## Primary 4 assessment

By Primary 4, children are building confidence in their reading, writing and numeracy skills. To support this, pupils take part in the Scottish National Standardised Assessments (SNSAs), which help teachers to understand how well children are progressing. There are three tests in P4: Reading, writing and numeracy.

### ★ What

An online assessment in literacy and numeracy that helps teachers identify your child's strengths and areas for development. It's part of everyday classroom learning and not treated as a test.

### ★ When

There is no fixed date for the assessment, and it takes place at any time during the school year that suits the school.

### ★ How

Children complete short, computer-based tasks in reading and numeracy. The questions adapt based on how your child responds, giving a personalised experience. It's designed to be low-pressure and is completed in small groups or individually.

### ★ Why

Teachers combine the assessment information with what they observe in class to build a full picture of your child's progress. The results are not used to grade pupils or compare them to others.



**Encourage your child to talk about their day and explore maths in real life, like telling the time, measuring ingredients or budgeting pocket money.**



### Did you know?

These assessments are designed to be part of learning, not separate from it. Many children don't even realise they've completed them.

*If your child attends a Gaelic medium school, the assessments will be different. Speak to your child's teacher to find out how and when the assessments will take place.*





## Primary 7 assessment

Primary 7 marks an important transition year as children prepare for the move to secondary school. These assessments support classroom learning without placing pressure on pupils.

### ★ What

An online, adaptive assessment in literacy and numeracy that supports teachers in understanding how well children are progressing as they approach the end of primary school.

### ★ When

There is no fixed date for the assessment and it takes place at any time during the school year that suits the school.

### ★ How

Pupils complete short, computer-based tasks. The difficulty level adjusts based on how your child answers, making it suitable for a wide range of abilities. It's designed to be low-stress and fits naturally into the school day.

### ★ Why

The results are combined with everyday classwork to give teachers a rounded view of your child's strengths and next steps. They are not used to grade pupils or rank schools.



Support your child by discussing current events, encouraging independent reading and involving them in planning and budgeting activities at home.



### Did you know?

These assessments are not high-stakes tests and aren't used to rank children or to sort them into different learning levels in secondary school.





# Wales



## Personalised assessments

Primary school children take personalised assessments as part of the Curriculum for Wales. These are designed to support learning, not to test or rank children, and they adapt to each pupil's responses to give a more accurate picture of where they are and what they need next.

### ★ What

Personalised assessments focus on three key areas:

- **Welsh and English Reading** – looks at how well children understand written texts
- **Numeracy (Procedural)** – checks their understanding of number skills and methods
- **Numeracy (Reasoning)** – explores how children apply procedural skills to solve problems and explain their thinking

They are taken on a computer or tablet and automatically adapt to your child's level, giving questions that are neither too easy nor too difficult.

### ★ When

Children take these assessments once a year in each subject area from Year 2 up to Year 9. Schools can choose when the assessments take place, so it may vary from one school to another. Schools may also choose to take the assessments a second time in the year to help them see how pupils have progressed and support their learning.

### ★ How

Each assessment is done on a screen and typically takes around 30 to 60 minutes, though they are not strictly timed. Your child will answer questions that become easier or harder based on how they respond, helping to build a detailed and accurate picture of their strengths and areas for growth.

### ★ Why

Teachers use the results alongside everyday classroom learning to help plan lessons and

support. You'll receive a parent report that outlines how your child did and suggestions of ways you can help at home.

Encourage regular reading and real-world maths practice, like measuring while cooking or comparing prices when shopping.



### Did you know?

Because the assessments adapt to your child, no two children will get the same set of questions. The focus is on providing personalised feedback to help each child progress. This makes the experience feel less like a test.





#### ☆ How

Teachers assess pupils' abilities in Communication, Using Mathematics and Using ICT through classroom activities and tasks. The assessments are designed to be part of everyday learning so pupils are not subjected to high-pressure testing environments.

#### ☆ Why

The assessments help teachers report information to parents and set targets for pupils. They also help schools to measure performance and allow the government to monitor the education system's effectiveness.



Engage with your child's learning by discussing their school activities and encouraging the development of communication and maths skills at home.

## New key stage assessments in literacy and numeracy

In March 2026, some pupils in Northern Ireland will take part in system-level sample assessments in literacy and numeracy at the end of Key Stages 1, 2 and 3. These are not tests for individual children or schools, but a way to check how well the education system is working overall. A small, representative group of pupils will be chosen to take part. The assessments will be organised by the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA).

# Northern Ireland

## Primary assessments

Primary school pupils are assessed through a combination of ongoing teacher observations and formal evaluations known as Levels of Progression (LoP).

**These assessments focus on key cross-curricular skills:**

- Communication
- Using Mathematics
- Using ICT

#### ☆ What

The LoP provide clear 'can do' statements that outline the skills pupils are expected to demonstrate. These help teachers, parents and pupils understand progress in developing essential skills needed for life and work.

#### ☆ When

Pupils are assessed using the LoP at three points in their school journey:

- End of Key stage 1 (Primary 4/P4)
- End of Key stage 2 (Primary 7/P7)
- End of Key stage 3 (Year 10)



# Supporting your child at home

Supporting your child's learning outside the classroom doesn't have to be complicated. Small, everyday actions can make a big impact.

Here are some ways you can help at home:

- **Keep learning light and enjoyable**  
Use games, storytelling and play to explore ideas and practise skills. Avoid turning learning into a chore
- **Celebrate effort, not just results**  
Let your child know that trying their best matters more than getting everything right. This builds confidence and resilience
- **Ask open-ended questions**  
Instead of asking "Did you do well today?" Try, "What did you learn today?" or "What was the most fun part of school?"
- **Stay connected with the teacher**  
Don't hesitate to reach out to your child's teacher if you're unsure about schoolwork, assessments or how to help at home. Remember that you're a team



- Join Parentkind's parent webinars, where we host experts in education, parenting and child development who offer practical tips and insights to support your child's learning and wellbeing at home



Scan the QR code to find out more about our webinars



**Make a simple homework routine together and let your child choose the order of tasks. Giving them a sense of control can increase motivation and reduce resistance.**



## Did you know?

Children are more likely to engage with learning when they feel supported and involved. Even 10 to 15 minutes of shared reading or practising tables can make a big difference over time. To make it fun and relevant, try linking activities to your child's interests - this helps keep them motivated and more engaged.



# Frequently asked questions

## Q Will my child be told their scores?

**A** Usually only in the final year of primary school, but schools vary. It's best to ask your child's teacher if you're unsure. Remember, younger children are not expected to worry about results – teachers will guide them gently. In Wales, feedback and progress reports from the personalised assessments can be shared with learners. Schools will decide how best to do this. The progress report contains a score, but this is just one of the pieces of information shared.

## Q What if my child is unwell during an assessment?

**A** Speak to the school as soon as possible. Schools are understanding and should be able to rearrange or make adjustments to ensure your child can take the assessment at another time.

## Q Do these tests affect which school my child goes to?

**A** Primary assessments are used mainly to understand how well your child is progressing and to help schools plan their teaching. Remember that assessments are just one part of the picture schools will have on a learner. The results for Year 6 SATs in England are shared with secondary schools, but it isn't the only aspect of a child's learning they will see.

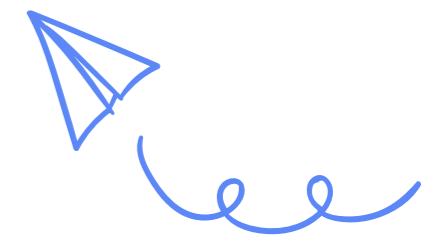
## Q How can I help if my child is anxious?

**A** First, let them know that it's perfectly normal to feel a bit nervous. Reassure them that these assessments are simply a way for teachers to see how best to help them learn. Keep routines steady at home and give lots of praise for effort, not just outcomes. Most importantly, help them feel valued and supported, whatever the result.



## Did you know?

Many children find assessments easier when they're not framed as a 'test'. Talking about them as a chance to 'show what you know' or 'help your teacher understand what to teach next' can ease pressure.



# Useful contacts and resources

## England

### **National curriculum assessments: information for parents**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum-assessments-information-for-parents>

### **Primary assessments: future dates**

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/primary-assessments-future-dates>

### **Reception Baseline Assessment: information for parents**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reception-baseline-assessment-information-for-parents>

### **Phonics screening check: information for parents**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/phonics-screening-check-information-for-parents>

### **Optional key stage 1 national curriculum tests: information for parents**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum-assessments-key-stage-1-tests>

### **Multiplication tables check: information for parents**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/multiplication-tables-check>

### **National curriculum assessments: key stage 2 tests**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-2-national-curriculum-tests-and-results-information-for-parents>

### **Primary school progress measures: information for schools and parents**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/primary-school-progress-measures-information-for-schools-and-parents>

### **National Curriculum Assessments: past test materials**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum-assessments-past-test-materials>

For more information and updates on primary assessments in England, visit the official [www.gov.uk/sta](https://www.gov.uk/sta) guidance page.

## Scotland

### **Parentzone Scotland**

<https://education.gov.scot/parentzone/>

### **National Standardised Assessment for Scotland**

<https://standardisedassessment.gov.scot/>

### **Assessments in Scotland: questions and answers**

<https://standardisedassessment.gov.scot/questions-and-answers/>

## Wales

### **Curriculum for Wales: information for parents, carers and learners**

<https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/curriculum-for-wales-information-for-parents-carers-and-learners>

### **Personalised assessments in Wales information for parents and carers**

<https://hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/reading-and-numeracy-assessments/personalised-assessments-information-for-parents-and-carers>

In Wales, schools do not refer to Key Stages, but to **progression steps** which broadly correspond to expectations at ages five, eight, 11, 14 and 16.

## Northern Ireland

### **NI Direct: assessments**

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/assessments>

## Other academic resources for parents and children

### Key stage 1 English

#### **BBC Bitesize**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/subjects/zv48q6f>

#### **BBC Skillswise**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/teach/skillswise/articles/zjg4scw>

#### **Top Marks**

<https://www.topmarks.co.uk/>

#### **Starfall**

<https://www.starfall.com/h/>

#### **Phonicsplay**

<https://www.phonicsplay.co.uk/>

#### **National Literacy Trust**

<https://literacytrust.org.uk/>

#### **Oxford Owl**

<https://home.oxfordowl.co.uk/>

#### **Once Upon a Picture**

<https://www.onceuponapicture.co.uk/>

#### **The Literacy Shed**

<https://www.literacyshed.com/>

### Key stage 1 maths

#### **National Numeracy**

<https://www.nationalnumeracy.org.uk/helping-children-maths>

#### **Oxford Owl**

<https://home.oxfordowl.co.uk/maths/>

#### **ICT Games**

<https://ictgames.com/>

#### **Maths is fun**

<https://www.mathsisfun.com/>

### Key stage 2 maths

#### **Times Tables Rock Stars**

<https://trockstars.com>

#### **Numbots**

<https://play.numbots.com/#/intro>

Paid subscription (if not signed up through your school)

#### **White Rose Maths**

<https://whiteroseeducation.com/parent-pupil-resources/maths>

#### **Maths Frame**

<https://mathsframe.co.uk>

#### **BBC Bitesize Key Stage 2 Maths**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/subjects/z826n39>

#### **National Numeracy**

<https://www.nationalnumeracy.org.uk/helping-children-maths>

#### **Maths Bot**

<https://mathsbot.com/manipulatives/blocks>

#### **Times Tables**

[www.timestables.co.uk](http://www.timestables.co.uk)

#### **Oxford Owl**

<https://home.oxfordowl.co.uk/maths/primary-multiplication-division/help-with-times-tables/>

#### **UK Maths Trust**

(includes information about upcoming Olympiads)  
<https://ukmt.org.uk/what-we-do/advice-for-parents>

#### **Times table books and games**

<https://www.galttoys.com/collections/home-learning-books/products/times-tables>

#### **Dienes/Maths cubes**

<https://www.themathsmum.co.uk/maths-accessories/set-of-dienes-base-10-with-place-value-mats>

#### **Disclaimer:**

All information in this guide was correct at the time of publishing in September 2025. For the most up-to-date details, please refer to official government sources.

# About Parentkind

Parentkind is on a mission to enrich the educational experience for every child – both at home and at school. We empower anyone with parental or educational responsibility with the knowledge, ideas and resources to give young people the very best start in life. As one of the largest federated charities in the UK, Parentkind has a network of 23,500 Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), parent councils and schools, and mobilises more than 100,000 volunteers to raise vital funds for schools.

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